

Metaphysics and Dogma

By Catherine Richardson

Metaphysics and New Age ideas offer exciting and empowering new ways to look at God and spirituality. Discovering this new way of thinking, acting, and being has literally changed my life, and perhaps even saved it. New Age teachings have provided a wonderful refuge, a place to connect with God and discover spirituality, and a place to affirm the existence of the afterlife.

It's a refuge for those who are tired of the harshness and judgment of traditional Christianity as practiced by some; of being told they are unworthy or sinners; of being told what their own truth is by others; of being told whom it is acceptable to love; of being given rules and commandments by which to live; and of even being told how to vote. These new teachings offer valuable tools for contacting the God within you, and bringing this awesome power into your lives; for creating prosperity; for developing an innate "knowing" as to the right path for you; even for preventing and healing illness and injury.



However, if not carefully presented, these teachings are open to misinterpretation and manipulation into "old-style" religious dogma. The summer before I started college, I worked at Red Clay State Historic Area, a park in Tennessee built to commemorate the place where the Cherokee Trail of Tears began, a forced removal and march of the entire Cherokee Nation (save a few hundred who hid in the Appalachian Mountains) from Red Clay, Tennessee, to their new, government-designated "home" in Oklahoma. An estimated 4,000 of the Nations' members died on the Trail of Tears—from disease, starvation, exhaustion, dehydration, and exposure to the elements. Many Cherokees live in poverty today on the Oklahoma reservation.

They had been a peaceful nation, solving disputes between tribes by playing a game similar to today's jai alai rather than resorting to violence. With the onslaught of so-called civilization, they had responded by creating their own formal government, devising their own alphabet, and circulating a Cherokee newspaper throughout the Cherokee territories. They were also a very spiritually-connected tribe.

One day, a woman came to the park to view our small museum, while I made myself available to answer questions. After viewing the exhibit, she said to me, "You know why the Cherokee Nation suffered so much, don't you?"

Yet I've come to realize that many New Age teachings lead some people today to similar conclusions.

Thinking I was going to hear some interesting historical and anthropological data, I said, "No, why?"

She answered, "Because they weren't Christians." Her view was that the Cherokees suffered, and many continue to suffer today, because God had cursed them as nonbelievers. I was pretty shocked by the woman's words, and certain once again that I was not interested in her type of Christianity. Yet I've come to realize that many New Age teachings lead some people today to similar conclusions.

How, you might ask, could there be any such similarities? Please allow me to explain. I believe someone could easily interpret or misinterpret New Age and metaphysical teachings in such a way as to find fault with the Cherokees. First of all, the Universal Metaphysical Ministry (of which I happen to be a member) teaches that "all human suffering is the direct result of not following the Will of God." If this is true, then an obvious conclusion would be that the Cherokees were not following the will of God. Or did it mean that the agents of the U.S. government were not following the will of God? Well, metaphysics seems to place the responsibility for one's life and situation squarely on the shoulders of that particular soul, since we are all powerful creators in our own right.

Likewise, if our thoughts create our reality, then it might seem that the Cherokees were exhibiting negative thinking. Perhaps they did not meditate correctly, or use properly worded affirmations. Another possible reason for their suffering is that they were paying a karmic debt; in other words, they had committed bad deeds in a past or present life, and were now remitting payment for it. They therefore brought it on themselves, and got what they deserved—according to the Laws of the Universe.

These conclusions are not as uncommon as you might think. I have participated in a large online metaphysical forum in which people suggested that Donald Trump is "more spiritual" because he is wealthy and healthy; and that starving and AIDS-infected infants in Africa are souls who have "bad karma" as the result of committing bad acts in previous lifetimes. I am not prepared to say whether Donald Trump is more or less spiritual than anyone else, nor that these children have so-called bad karma. But I do feel that if people are judging others in this way as the result of exposure to New Age teachings, then we as metaphysical practitioners must make an effort to be more clear.

These hypothetical conclusions I have drawn are not what I believe. I believe these may be possibilities (but not probabilities); but if we are looking to assign blame, we are clearly misinterpreting the spirit of most New Age teachings. I believe the reasons we incarnate here on Earth are as varied as the souls who come here. I believe these are possibilities among infinite other possibilities. I believe that there must be room for the mystery, because it is through reaching for the answers that we go inward, and stretch and expand as souls. It is the invitation that these great mysteries offer that leads to true wisdom, peace and serenity—to accessing one's authentic power. I believe the emphasis should remain on the tools for doing so, and on the

positive aspects of the wonderful ways we can create our reality through our thoughts, visions, and energy.

If we choose to teach the idea that all suffering is the direct result of not following the will of God, I believe it is crucial to define the word “suffering.” I very much favor Neale Donald Walsh’s description of suffering: “[S]uffering has nothing to do with events, but with one’s reaction to them.” Perhaps some of these souls incarnated into these conditions in order to teach others about kindness, compassion, and acceptance. I believe the possibilities are immeasurable, and are not necessarily about fault or blame.

With regard to money and material possessions, I admire the work of many in the field in teaching that money is neither evil, nor dirty; and that one does not have to take a vow of poverty or swear off all material goods in order to be “spiritual.” Nonetheless, many New Age teachers now imply that the lack of financial and material prosperity in one’s life indicates a lack of spiritual awareness, alignment, or consciousness.

I believe that it is important simply to teach that money is just energy, like everything else. While you may choose to attach a value judgment to it as good or evil, the Universe certainly does not. If it is something you choose to attract or attain, then there are wonderful metaphysical tools to assist with this. If it is something of which you have little, this is not necessarily a reflection of how evolved or Godly you are. It is simply what, on a deep soul level, you have chosen for yourself in this moment.



In light of these issues, I have created a list of suggestions to metaphysical practitioners in an effort to assure that our teachings are not misunderstood, and that we don’t fall into the inviting habit of presenting our views in a dogmatic fashion. These suggestions are as follows:

- 1. Be extremely cautious when using absolutes.** Leave room for other possibilities. Metaphysics is an evolving field, just as you and I and the human race are constantly evolving.
- 2. Choose your words very carefully.** Try to phrase things in such a way that, if quoted out of context, their meaning is not lost or open to misinterpretation.
- 3. Begin statements with “I believe,” or “some mystics believe,” or “many believe.”** I know that I am much more likely to be receptive to what someone is teaching me if they begin in this way, rather than saying, “This is how it is.” In fact, I became interested in metaphysics in part because a spiritual teacher approached me in this manner, instead of handing down a sermon to me. This left room for my own belief systems, and was respectful to me as an autonomous thinker.
- 4. Do not explain or define everything.** Leave room for the mystery, and for people’s own upbringing, beliefs, understandings, and culture. Remember, it is through reaching for the

mystery that we connect to spirit and grow. Remember, it is through seeking answers to our unanswered questions that we expand.

5. Leave room for your client or audience's own intuition, and honor and respect this intuition. Meditate upon the paradox that there can exist an Absolute Truth, as well as many truths. Remember, there are as many unique perspectives as there are souls on the planet.

6. Focus on the positive. I believe this is much more productive and expansive than focusing upon issues such blame, fault, or guilt.

7. Focus on the present and the future. Dwell on the past only insofar as it can inform the way your client or audience exists in the present. Past life experiences, for example, can provide deep understanding and healing in the present. It is your role to help the client understand and heal the consequences of past choices, not to encourage guilt or self-punishment.

8. By all means, avoid blaming or judgmental language. You are not here to criticize or denigrate yourself or other living embodiments of God.

9. Teach and share tools for connecting to spirit and expanding spiritually. I believe this is the heart of the metaphysical practitioner's work. When we reach this space of Oneness, and share the feeling of unconditional love, joy, and expansion, then no one needs to be told that we are all One, and to love one another. When we are able to access our own Higher Mind and Inner Wisdom, then we intuitively know how to respond to situations from our Highest Self. Our will and God's are one, and there is no need for fear, judgment, or dogma.

10. Empower. Empower. Empower. It is not your job, nor your place, to tell others how to live. It is important to honor every being's path. What is important is empowering people to figure these things out on their own, from the space of their Higher Mind or God/Mind. It is not your role to teach them that they must come to you for their wisdom and their answers. Share your wisdom and your answers, but encourage them to find their own.

11. Stay open-minded, remain flexible, and keep learning. Energy, ideas, and people are always changing.

12. Lead by example, in thought, word and deed. Instead of telling people how to behave and what to choose, simply embody it. This is the empowering way to lead.

13. When sharing your message, be kind, compassionate, and centered. It's okay to stand up for what you believe in, as long as you do so with kindness, compassion, acceptance, and an energy that radiates love. People can feel it.

14. Always allow others to question. Do not set yourself up as the ultimate authority on spiritual matters, and therefore beyond reproach. Certainly do not present yourself or your teachings as something to be blindly obeyed.

15. Outside of a professional setting, only offer very personal spiritual or intuitive advice or insight when asked. Do not use the teachings or your intuitive insight as a weapon or something hurtful in order to win a personal argument.

16. Beware of taking old, traditional religious ideas and simply re-labeling them with New Age “lingo.” This is an easy trap in which to fall. For example, be careful not to simply substitute “less evolved,” or “right and wrong” for good and evil. I am not suggesting that it is always inappropriate to use these words. I am suggesting that you not use these terms to articulate your judgments of people or situations.

17. TRUST that people will find their truth. People will find their way, and attract what they need in order to serve their soul’s purpose and evolution. Know that if people don’t find their truth in your teachings, they will find it elsewhere if they continue to seek it. Focus on teaching the tools, and remember the space we all find when we use them. This is the unity and the power. Remember the love, peace and serenity you feel—and the safety—when you connect with and embody the God within. I believe that the more we can help people connect with their divinity and consciously create their lives, the more we serve a higher purpose. But trust in God, and in the Universe.

The foregoing are simply suggestions of ways to insure that New Age and metaphysical teachings remain inviting, empowering, flexible, and expansive. These guidelines have been useful to me both as a spiritual counselor, and as someone who seeks to serve as a catalyst for the spiritual expansion of others. I offer them to you in the hope that they may be useful to you as well.

Namaste.

About the Channel



Catherine Richardson is a former corporate attorney who spiritually awakened following a near death experience in 2000. Shortly thereafter, she began manifesting intuitive abilities, and decided to pursue a career in the healing arts.

Catherine went on to earn a Ph.D. in transpersonal counseling, and now helps others to empower themselves and to expand spiritually. You can reach her through her practice in San Diego, California, or at www.truthjoylove.com.

Book by Catherine Richardson

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